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Current and Ideal Team Roles:
Relationships to Job Satisfaction and Calling

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Abstract

Successful teamwork is an important factor for positive outcomes at the organizational and the individual level. Best results should be expected when every team member can contribute his or her specific set of strengths and skills, with all of the necessary skills being present in a team. Recently a new model of team roles developed from a positive psychological perspective has been suggested comprising of seven informal team roles. The present study examines the relevance of role-fit between roles displayed in the current team and roles displayed in an ideal team on a person's job satisfaction and calling. For this purpose, a sample of $N = 342$ employed participants who took part in an online survey were analyzed. Results show that most current team roles contribute to job satisfaction and calling, whereas only few relationships are found with ideal roles. Further, the interplay between current and ideal role behavior is relevant for job satisfaction in most team roles, but only for few roles with regard to calling. Thus, both current and ideal team roles are relevant for work-related outcomes; this information could potentially be used as a starting point for positive interventions at the workplace.

Keywords: team roles, job satisfaction, calling, role theory, role-fit

Public significance statement

When working in teams, every team member contributes to the working climate and outcome in different ways, bringing in their strengths and skills and thus taking up one (or more) team role(s). The present study suggests that it is important to distinguish between the team roles someone performs in his or her current team and the ideal roles someone would prefer to perform in an "ideal team" (i.e., a team that the person imagines as ideally suiting them but which may not necessarily exist). For some team roles, job satisfaction is highest

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when ideal and current team role correspond, whereas for other roles it is best when the role is performed to a larger extent in the current team than in an ideal team.

Introduction

Teamwork has often been described as a crucial factor for organizational performance (Petty, Beadle, Lowery, Chapman, & Connell, 1995). It has been suggested that successful teamwork can yield several benefits for the organization in terms of costs, innovation, and quality (Dunphy & Bryant, 1996). It can also go along with increased job satisfaction for employees (Wilson, DeJoy, Vandenberg, Richardson, & McGrath, 2004). While the moral aspects of teamwork have been studied within positive psychology from its advent (e.g., “teamwork” is also one of the 24 character strengths in the Values-in-action [VIA] classification; Peterson & Seligman, 2004), other aspects of teamwork have hardly been studied in this research area so far. An important question is how teams should be designed in order to foster successful teamwork and for maximizing potential positive effects for both, the employer and the employee. We expect that for many teamwork tasks every team member is required to contribute. For such tasks, best results should be expected when each team member contributes his or her specific set of skills and strengths (while this does not exclude the possibility of several team members having the same, important skills and strengths). At best, the contributions of the individual team members should complement each other without missing out on relevant strengths or skills and duplicating skills and strengths unnecessarily.

Team Roles

One factor relating to this idea is role behavior in teams¹. While some authors define roles as sets of behavioral expectations that are tied to an organizational position (e.g., Sluss, van Dick, & Thompson, 2011), Biddle (1979) provided a broader definition of roles as “those behavior characteristics of one or more persons in a context” (p. 58). Accordingly, roles are

¹ Teams are defined in line with Kozwowski and Ilgen (2006) „as (a) two or more individuals who (b) socially interact (face-to-face or, increasingly, virtually); (c) possess one or more common goals; (d) are brought together to perform organizationally relevant tasks; (e) exhibit interdependencies with respect to workflow, goals, and outcomes; (f) have different roles and responsibilities; and (g) are together embedded in an encompassing organizational system, with boundaries and linkages to the broader system context and task environment“ (p. 79).

expected to be more or less stable, context-dependent behavior patterns. In the present study, we are focusing on informal roles that are not explicitly tied a specific position and on self-evaluations of role performance – regardless of exceptions or perceptions of others.

Several authors have suggested different roles that are relevant for teamwork, ranging from four to fifteen roles (Senior, 1997; for an overview see also Mathieu, Tannenbaum, Kukenberger, Donsbach, & Alliger, 2015). The most popular theory was presented by Belbin (1981, 1993) who suggested, in his seminal work, that there are nine informal roles in teams (i.e. *plant*, *resource investigator*, *co-ordinator*, *shaper*, *monitor evaluator*, *team worker*, *implementer*, *completer finisher*, and *specialist*) that should be balanced in successful teamwork. Belbin (1981) also created the *Belbin Team Role Self-Perception Inventory* for the assessment of these roles. This inventory asks for behaviors that would be shown in a hypothetical situation, which indicates the person's preferred team roles. It is suggested that every individual performs these roles to different degrees.

Despite Belbin's important contribution to the field, the application of his model and his questionnaire are limited in several ways: Firstly, the psychometric properties of the questionnaire have often been criticized (e.g., low internal consistency and an unclear factor structure; Furnham, Steele, & Pendleton, 1993). Secondly, Fisher, Hunter, and Macrosson (2001) reported that assessing team roles based on behavioral data also failed to provide convergent and discriminant validity, and suggested that the team roles could easily fit into the big five factors of personality. They propose that a "big five" team role model could be guided by the progression of tasks in the delivery of a project with openness covering planning and defining resources, extraversion covering implementing, conscientiousness covering scheduling, agreeableness covering maintaining human relations and neuroticism covering reporting tasks. They suggest that it is possible that "Belbin had, unwittingly and imprecisely, been identifying the "Big Five" while observing his teams engaged in their business simulation exercise" (p. 142). Thirdly, Belbin's team role inventory asks how a

person “can make positive contributions to a team” in general, which does not take situational aspects (i.e., the current team role, and the divergence to one’s ideal function) into account.

A Positive Psychology Approach to Team Roles

Most team role inventories (e.g., Belbin, 1981; Mathieu et al., 2015) ask about typical role behaviors, attitudes, and skills. Also, several conceptualizations of team roles (such as Belbin’s) entail both positive and negative behaviors as well as strengths and weaknesses in a team role. This approach seems limited when the main focus is on optimal functioning, since it suggests that each strength comes at the “cost” of a specific weakness, while current conceptualizations would assume that strengths are separate dimensions and independent from weaknesses (cf. Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

Ruch, Gander, Platt, & Hofmann (2016) followed a different approach based on a positive psychology perspective: They were interested in positive role behaviors that allow an individual to flourish; particularly when own strengths support the performance of one or more specific roles. For this purpose, Ruch et al. (2016) used a new model suggesting seven positive informal team roles that are expected to contribute to positive teamwork. These roles are: Idea Creator, Information Gatherer, Decision Maker, Implementer, Influencer, Energizer, and Relationship Manager (VIA Institute on Character 2013; see Table 1 for a description of the team roles).

Insert Table 1 about here

Ruch et al. (2016) developed a self-report questionnaire (the *VIA Team Roles Inventory*) for the assessment of the degree to which one is optimally functioning in these roles in the current team (coined as “masterfully performing” a role): Therefore, for every team role, the respondent is asked about ability, enjoyment, and flow-experiences in this role. This approach has the advantage that homogeneous sets of items can be used for every team

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role. Further, these items are directly referring to the role behavior, instead of asking about general behavior patterns that might be strongly related to other basic measures of personality (see Fisher et al., 2001). Also, in comparison to other conceptualizations, this approach does not ask about the frequency of specific, neutral behaviors that are typically performed at work but instead asks participants to what extent they are flourishing (i.e., asking for ability, enjoyment, and flow) when performing each of these roles. Finally, this approach allows comparing the convergence between roles that are performed in a current team and ideal roles (i.e., roles that would be performed when in an ideal team). Although we currently do not know to what kind of teams or team tasks these roles apply, we expect that most of the roles are relevant for most types of teamwork.

Ruch et al. (2016) suggest that this approach offers a new perspective on team roles. Moreover, in contrast to other existing inventories, the *VIA Team Roles Inventory* showed good psychometric characteristics and initial evidence supports the proposed factorial structure. Lastly, Ruch et al. (2016) report robust relationships of all roles to job satisfaction, whereas relationships to other positive outcomes have not been examined so far.

Person-Role Fit

From an individual differences perspective, successful teamwork might benefit from a good “fit” between the individual and the environment. In order to achieve a good fit it has been suggested that not only characteristics of the individual (such as personality traits or values) should be compatible with those of the other team members (i.e., person-team fit; Kristof, 1996), but also the “compatibility between an individual’s personal characteristics and the features of his or her role within the team” (*person-role fit*; DeRue & Morgeson, 2007, p. 1242). DeRue and Morgeson (2007) directly asked participants about their fit in their roles and report that increases in the person-role fit go along with increases in performance and the satisfaction with individual growth. Furthermore, the person-role fit was also found to be more dynamic than other fit characteristics (such as value congruence with other team

members). Therefore, the perceived role fit might also be more susceptible for workplace interventions.

For deepening the understanding of the person-role fit it might be particularly interesting to assess the person-role fit for specific team roles. Further, instead of directly assessing the degree of fit, one might consider the preferred or ideal behavior (i.e., as an individual's personal characteristic) as well as the behavior that is actually performed in the current team (i.e., as the degree to which the environment allows the display of a role). This would also allow for examining the convergence (or discrepancy) between the two, which is of particular interest when it comes to understanding flourishing teamwork and targeted interventions.

Several theories suggest that in order to achieve an optimal state of well-being ("flourishing"), an individual has to fulfill his or her potential. This idea dates back to Aristotle's concept of *eudemonia*. He suggested that living a good life requires living in accordance with one's ideal, true self (Norton, 1976). We propose that ideal role performance can be regarded as being an indicator for one's maximal potential in teamwork. Further, we hypothesize that ideal role performance (i.e., the extent to which one would perform a role in an ideal team) can be distinguished from role performance in the current team. Similar ideas have also been brought forward by Rogers (1963) who suggested in his self-congruence theory that a fully functioning person has a strong correspondence between actual and ideal self-images; Higgins (1987), who suggested that discrepancies between actual and ideal self-states indicate the absence of positive outcomes; and others, who described the convergence between actual and ideal as authentic (Ryan, 1993), personally expressive (Waterman, 1993), or self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Sheldon, Ryan, Rawsthorne, and Ilardi (1997) summarized this point of view: "Roles and situations are assumed to differentially afford support for authentic self-expression and self-organized behaviors, and some roles may foster false self-presentations, or departures from how one might ideally choose to be." (p. 1380).

The assumption that a strong convergence between actual and ideal behaviors has beneficial consequences has received empirical support from studies that assessed similar constructs. Sheldon et al. (1997) reported robust positive relationships between well-being and role authenticity, and negative relationships with role conflict. Demerouti, Bakker, and Fried (2012) reported links between role clarity and work enjoyment; and several authors link person-organization fit to positive outcomes, such as calling (Novak, 1996), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), or job satisfaction (Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003). Thus, there seems to be support for the notion that current behavior, ideal behavior, and their convergence play an important role for positive work-related outcomes. To the best of our knowledge, no study has addressed these questions with regard to team roles so far.

The aims of the present study were thus twofold: Firstly, we aimed at creating an inventory for the assessment of ideal team roles by rephrasing the items of the VIA Team-Roles Inventory with regard to an ideal team. The revised inventory assesses the degree to which one would masterfully perform the team roles when one would be in an ideal team setting. Secondly, we aimed at studying the relationships of ideal team roles, current team roles, and their convergence (and differences between current and ideal roles, respectively) with positive outcomes at the individual level. As positive outcomes, we considered global work satisfaction, and the perception of one's work as a job (seeing work as a necessity), a career (seeing work as opportunity for advancement), or a calling (seeing work as a fulfillment). We hypothesized that current and ideal team roles would be strongly related without being redundant. Further, we expected current team roles to contribute positively to work satisfaction and calling, whereas we expected negative relationships to seeing one's work as a job, while we did not expect relationships with seeing one's work as a career. For ideal team roles, we expected no (or only small positive relationships) to work satisfaction and calling or other outcome variables, since ideal roles do not focus on the current job, while work satisfaction or calling do.

Finally, we hypothesized that a convergence (or a “fit”) between ideal and current team roles would go along with higher job satisfaction and calling. More specifically, we expected for all roles the highest job satisfaction when an individual showed high levels of both, ideal and current roles; while we expected the discrepancy of the two (whether they are on the same level or not) to be more relevant for job satisfaction than the absolute level (e.g., higher job satisfaction for people with low levels in both than for people with high levels in ideal, but low levels in current team role performance).

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of $N = 342$ English speaking participants (70.8% women) aged 18 to 77 ($M = 47.45$, $SD = 11.52$). About half of the sample (47.1%) had post-college education, 24.4% had bachelor-level education, 1.8% had associate-level education, 9.7% had some college education, 2.6% had high school education, and 1.5% had some high school education. Participants were from all over the world, but predominantly the US (42.7%), Australia (14.3%), Canada (8.2%), and the UK (6.4%). All participants were currently working in a broad array of occupations.

All participants were recruited via the Internet and completed online versions of the questionnaires on a website affiliated with the VIA Institute on Character that is offering the possibility to complete a measure on character strengths and receive a feedback on their strengths. After completing the measure on character strengths participants were prompted to volunteer for this study. No incentives for participation were offered.

Instruments

The *VIA Team-Roles Inventory* (Ruch et al., 2016) is a 35-item self-report instrument for assessing the degree to which one “masterfully performs” (i.e., the ability to perform this role, and the enjoyment and engagement/flow in performing this role) seven team roles in one’s current team; Idea Creator, Information Gatherer, Decision Maker, Implementer,

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Influencer, Energizer, and Relationship Manager. Respondents read a short description of the roles and then are asked to rate 5 items per role covering ability (2 items: “In my current team, I’m at my best when coming up with ideas”, and “I am able to be a great idea creator within my current team”), enjoyment (2 items: “I enjoy creating ideas within my current team”, and “it makes me feel good to create ideas within my team”), and engagement/flow (1 item: “I have a feeling of energized focus when coming up with ideas within my current team”) on a 7-point Likert-style scale, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) through 7 (“strongly agree”). Ruch et al. (2016) report high internal consistencies, a good fit to the hypothesized seven-factorial model, and provide initial information on the validity of the inventory (relationships with job satisfaction and character strengths that were in line with theoretical considerations). Internal consistencies were high in the current sample (all $\alpha \geq .87$).

The *VIA Ideal Team-Roles Inventory* was created by rephrasing all 35 items from the VIA Team-Roles Inventory. While the content was retained, the items were reformulated with regard to an ideal team. Participants were instructed to think of an ideal team, i.e., a team in which they could apply all their strengths and do what they do best. All items used the same 7-point Likert-style scale as in the original inventory, ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). A sample item is “If I would be in my ideal team, I’d be at my best when coming up with ideas.” (Idea Creator). For examining the factorial validity of this inventory, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with MPLUS (using the WLSMV estimator). We tested the same factorial model (i.e., seven correlated factors) for the ideal team roles as for the current team roles. Results suggest that the data fit the hypothesized model very well, $\chi^2(539, N = 337) = 945.87, p < .001$; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .047, 90% CI [.042 - .052]; SRMR = .04. All standardized item loadings were positive, ranging from .73 to .96 (Median = .91). For all subsequent analyses, we computed the ideal team role scales by averaging the assigned items. All internal consistencies were high (all $\alpha \geq .86$).

The *Job Satisfaction Questionnaire* (JSQ; Andrews & Whitey, 1976) is a 5-item self-report questionnaire for the assessment of the satisfaction with different aspects of a job. All items use a 7-point Likert-style scale ranging from 7 (“delighted”) to 1 (“terrible”). Rentsch and Steel (1992) report good psychometric properties and convergent as well as predictive validity of the scale (positive correlations with other satisfaction measurements, as well as job performance, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions). Moreover, van Saane, Sluiter, Verbeek and Frings-Dresen (2003) report that the scale meets the criteria of reliability and validity in their systematic review on the assessment of job satisfaction. The JSQ is still widely used in research (e.g., Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2017; Maltby, Day, Hall, & Chivers, 2017). Internal consistency in the current sample was high ($\alpha = .86$).

The *Work Life Questionnaire* (WLQ; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997) assesses the degree to which one sees work as a job, a career, or a calling. Three brief scenarios that describe job, career, and calling are rated on a 4-point Likert-style scale ranging from 4 (“very much”) to 1 (“not at all like me”). The WLQ has frequently been used in research and its validity was shown in various respects, such as applying one’s signature strengths at work related to calling and calling related to the character strength of zest (e.g., Duffy, Autin, Allan, & Douglass, 2015; Peterson, Park, Hall, & Seligman, 2009; Harzer & Ruch, 2012).

Procedure

The study was conducted in accordance with APA ethical guidelines. According to the local ethical committee's guidelines, the present study did not require a formal approval.

The sample in this study is subset of the participants presented in Ruch et al. (2016) who completed additional questionnaires (the WLQ and the VIA Ideal Team Roles Inventory) and that described all team roles to be *relevant* in their current team.

Data Analysis

For examining the interplay between the current and ideal team roles in the prediction of job satisfaction and calling, we conducted polynomial regressions with response surface analyses (Shanock, Baran, Gentry, Pattison, & Heggstad, 2010). This procedure has been reported to be superior to more traditional methods of analysis (such as difference scores or moderated regression; see Edwards & Parry, 1993; Shanock et al., 2010), and has frequently been used to study the effects of agreement (and discrepancy) of two predictors (e.g., Martin & Keyes, 2015; Wagner, Baumann, & Hank, 2016). In the response surface analysis approach, first a polynomial regression is conducted, using Equation 1:

$$Z = b_0 + b_1X + b_2Y + b_3X^2 + b_4XY + b_5Y^2 + e \quad (1)$$

The coefficients b_1 to b_5 are then used to compute four surface test values; a_1 , a_2 , a_3 , and a_4 . The first surface value a_1 is the additive effect of the predictors ($a_1 = b_1 + b_2$) and represents the degree to which the outcome (i.e., job satisfaction and calling) increases as the predictors (i.e., current role performance and ideal role performance) increase. The second surface value a_2 is the effect of the squared predictors and their cross-product ($a_2 = b_3 + b_4 + b_5$) and describes the curvature of the relationship between X and Y in predicting Z ; it indicates that the outcome increases when both predictors have low or high values (bowl-shaped relationship; e.g., highest job satisfaction when current and ideal role performance are both low or both high for positive values of a_2), or whether the outcome decreases when both predictors have low or high values (dome-shaped relationship). The third surface values a_3 is the difference between the effects of X and Y ($a_3 = b_1 - b_2$) and indicates the degree to which the outcome increases when one predictor increases while the other one decreases (e.g., highest job satisfaction when a role is performed to a larger extent in the current team than in the ideal team for positive values of a_3). The fourth surface value a_4 is the difference between the sum of the squared predictors and their cross product ($a_4 = b_3 + b_5 - b_4$) and describes how the discrepancy in the predictors affects the outcome; i.e., whether the outcome increases when the discrepancy decreases, or vice versa (e.g., highest job satisfaction when the

discrepancy between current and ideal role performance are low for negative values of a_4).

We used the RSA package in R to run these analyses (Schönbrodt, 2017).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of team roles in current and ideal teams are given in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 2 shows that for an ideal team, all team roles received high ratings ($M \geq 5.42$, $\text{Min} = 1$, $\text{Max} = 7$), and would therefore be performed to a large extent by most participants in an ideal team. For the ideal and for the current team, the Idea Creator and the Relationship Manager received the highest, and the lowest ratings, respectively. All ratings were higher for ideal roles than for the current roles. Further, in line with our expectations, there was a strong convergence between the roles in the current and the ideal team, without being redundant (i.e., but still can be considered different constructs; mean correlation $r_{\text{mean}} = .76$). Correlations of team roles in current and ideal teams are given in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Table 3 shows that whereas all team roles in the current team were positively related to job satisfaction, the team roles in an ideal team were widely unrelated to job satisfaction (all n.s.), with the exception of the roles of Influencer and Energizer: Performing these roles in an ideal team went along with reporting higher job satisfaction. Most roles in the current team (i.e., Idea Creator [IC], Decision Maker [DM], Energizer [EN], and Influencer [IN]) were negatively related to seeing work as a job, whereas there were no relationships with roles in an ideal team. Seeing work as a career was positively related to the role of the

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Relationship Manager [RM] in both, current and ideal teams. Finally, higher scores in current team roles (except for the Information Gatherer [IG]) went along with higher scores in calling. The same applied to ideal teams for the roles of Implementer and Energizer.

We conducted response surface analyses for each team role separately for examining the influence of the agreement of role behavior in current and ideal teams on job satisfaction and calling. All predictors were centered around the (theoretical) midpoint of the scales (= 4) following recommendations on variable centering by Edwards (1994). For both job satisfaction and calling all full polynomial regression models were significant (job satisfaction: R^2 from .07 [IG] to .15 [IC]; calling: R^2 from .03 [IG] to .14 [IC]). Surface values and tests of significance are given in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Table 4 shows that, as expected, job satisfaction was higher in IG, IM, RM (all $p < .05$) and IC (marginally significant trend at $p < .10$) when role behavior in current and ideal teams was in agreement than when there was a discrepancy (a_4). Further, contrary to our expectations, we found effects for almost all team roles (with some being trends at $p < .10$) in a_3 , suggesting that the direction of the discrepancy is important; for most roles job satisfaction was higher, when the rating of the role in the current team was higher than in the ideal team. The exception was the role of the IG, where highest job satisfaction was reported, when the role was rated higher in the ideal team than in the current team. The combination of a_3 and a_4 suggests that the agreement between ideal and current roles is important, but that the optimal state with regard to job satisfaction is not reached when the ratings in both scales do not differ at all (identical ratings in both scales), but when there is a small discrepancy in the sense that the current role is rated higher than the ideal role. Moreover, there were no additive effects for any of the team roles (a_1), but job satisfaction was higher for the Idea Creator and the

Implementer when there were high or low scores in both scales, whereas job satisfaction was lower when both were middle-ranged (a_2).

Unexpectedly, fewer effects were found for calling. Only for the roles of IC and IG significant effects were found, indicating a highly similar pattern as for job satisfaction. For the Information Gatherer, higher calling was reported when the roles in the current and the ideal team were in accordance. For the Idea Creator, calling was higher when current roles were higher than ideal roles, and when both ratings were either low or high (and not in the middle-range).

Discussion

The present study extends the knowledge on team roles in two aspects. Firstly, we examined whether roles that are performed in the current team are related to the perception of work, that is, whether they go along with seeing one's work as a job, a career, or a calling. As expected, all roles, with the exception of the Information Gatherer, positively related to calling, and most roles (i.e., those that also showed the strongest relationships to job satisfaction) were negatively related to perceiving work as a job, while team roles existed widely independently from perceiving work as a career. Secondly, we extend previous findings by examining the effects of ideal team roles on job satisfaction and the perception of work. As expected, ideal team roles were widely unrelated to these outcomes.

When examining the person-role fit, that is the convergence between current and ideal team roles, we found a positive effect of the convergence between current and ideal roles on job satisfaction for Information Gatherer, Implementer, Relationship Manager, and (a trend for) Idea Creator in accordance with our hypotheses and in line with previous findings with regard to convergence (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2012; DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Sheldon et al., 1997). Thus, we conclude that the fit between current and ideal roles is relevant for job satisfaction for these roles. Unexpectedly, for Decision Maker, Influencer, and Energizer this was not the case, what might suggest that these roles represent different qualities. These roles

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seem to reflect behaviors that have positive effects on job satisfaction more or less regardless of their ideal, or preferred state. Similar effects have been reported in other domains. For example, Fleeson, Malanos, and Achille (2002) reported that the enactment of extraversion increases positive affect regardless of the personality disposition. Similarly, the display of character strengths is expected to be beneficial for all people, regardless of their disposition (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

For most team roles (except for Relationship Manager) there was an effect or a trend towards higher job satisfaction when the roles were performed to a greater extent in the current team than in the ideal team, whereas it was the other way round for Information Gatherer. Thus, it is worse if one desires to practice a role and is not able to, than when one practices the role more than he or she would do so ideally.

For calling, Idea Creator and Information Gatherer showed a similar pattern as for job satisfaction, whereas no further effects of the interplay between current and ideal team role behavior were found. These findings could suggest that the interplay between current and ideal roles is less relevant for calling – however, this might also be explained by methodological effects, since we used a one-item measure for assessing calling. It is possible that more and stronger effects would be found when other measures would be used (e.g., Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012).

Furthermore, all team roles received high ratings with regard to performing them in an ideal team, and when looking at mean levels, the ratings were higher for the ideal team than for the current team. These findings give first indication that all roles are considered worth fulfilling as the participants indicated agreement to strong agreement to masterfully performing those roles in ideal teams, and that the performance of these roles could be seen as an indicator for a flourishing individual in a team. Current and ideal team roles converged strongly, but differed in their correlation pattern with job satisfaction and calling. This supports the idea that the ideal and current roles indeed are distinguishable concepts despite

their empirical overlap. Further, this strong relationship between ideal and current team roles might suggest that people “craft” their jobs and current role in order to increase the fit with their ideal role (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), or that people adapt their ideal roles to the ones they are performing in the current team. Of course, this is not the only possible explanation for the strong convergence: Roles might also be formally (or informally) assigned by supervisors or the other team members based on an individual's strengths. Also, it is possible that a person's idea of his or her ideal role is strongly influenced by the roles he or she has been performing so far, and therefore not represent an adequate estimation.

Limitations

Firstly, this study relied on self-report measures. Whereas self-reports could be regarded as the most adequate measures for job satisfaction, calling, or ideal team roles, it would be highly interesting to consider further data sources such as peer- or supervisor ratings of current team roles, or to directly observe the behavior of team members in a team-based task. Moreover, future studies might consider other measures of job satisfaction and calling. Also, while this study focused on well-being related outcomes, considering job performance would be essential in future studies, and we would expect contributions of team roles primarily to context-related aspects but also to have task-related aspects of work. Further, differentiating between different occupations, different types of teams, or other work-related aspects could yield important additional information to the understanding of team roles. It can be hypothesized that the relevance of the team roles and their contribution to job satisfaction also depends on the occupation, and other variables, such as the degree of teamwork involved in the task, the role composition of the team, or the organizational structure: For example, we would expect that in organizations with flat hierarchies where teams are granted high autonomy, there are more opportunities for job crafting and roles are more important for outcomes on individual and team level than in less autonomous teams in hierarchical organizations. Moreover, one might expect that in some teams certain roles are of lesser

importance than others. Due to the correlational nature of this study, no conclusions on issues of directionality or causality can be made – although we would rather expect that role behavior affects job satisfaction, it is also possible that being satisfied with the job leads to more positive role-related behaviors, or a higher perceived fit between current and ideal team roles. Future studies using experimental designs will address these questions, also with regard to possible applications of these findings in interventions. Finally, whereas we focused on the individual so far, next steps include examining complete teams for being able to make conclusions on the level of teams and also include team-level outcomes such as team performance or -satisfaction.

Application

From an applied perspective, the results of this study suggest that team roles might — pending further research — offer an interesting additional possibility for workplace interventions with the goal to increase job satisfaction that might complement existing approaches. Since it has been suggested (DeRue & Morgeson, 2007) that the person-role fit is rather dynamic and less temporary stable than other fit characteristics (such as person-team fit), developing interventions that allow for crafting team roles in the current team might be a valuable approach. This could for example be achieved by changes in formal roles or changes in assigned tasks that allow individuals to perform different roles. This might be feasible for some roles, while not for others. Malleability and exchange might on one hand depend on the hierarchy of positions within a team – it might be unlikely that the role of a decision maker which is likely including some degree of management and a respective position, would be swapped among team members. However, a team member could be granted further competencies on making smaller decisions. On the other hand, it might depend on whether a particular training is needed for a person to fulfill a role within an organization (e.g., an Implementer might need a training in project management, etc.). Due to the strong relationships of team roles with character strengths, one might also consider adapting strengths-based interventions for the purpose of fostering team roles (e.g., Proyer, Ruch, & Buschor, 2013).

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Fostering competence in and performance of the roles Decision Maker, Influencer, and Energizer might be an especially suitable way for increasing job satisfaction since such interventions could be useful regardless of an individuals' ideal level in these roles. For other roles, such as Idea Creator, Implementer, Relationship Manager, and Information Gatherer the level of the ideal level of role performance should be considered as well. Although these ideas should be treated with caution due to the very preliminary nature of these findings, they might offer a good starting point for further cross-sectional studies on complete teams, and especially, intervention studies in teamwork settings.

Conclusion

In summary, this study further supports the notion that team roles are relevant for positive work-related outcomes at the individual level and suggests that the interplay between current and ideal team roles is important for job satisfaction. Further research that extends the findings of this study using complete teams and different methodological approaches is currently being conducted. Future findings will help for providing further insight to questions such as whether team roles are also beneficial on the team level, how ideal and current roles could be used for designing successful, productive, and satisfied teams, and how team composition with regard to team roles affects these outcomes.

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Table 1

Team Roles and their Description (VIA Institute on Character, 2013)

Team Role	Description
Idea Creator	When working a team, the creation of new ideas to come up with a solution for a difficult problem or task is essential. Thereby, Idea Creators are people with unconventional ways of coming to solutions and great ideas.
Information Gatherer	Information Gatherer search for information, for example on topics as best practices, new trends, potential vendors, competition, and so forth.
Decision Maker	Decision Makers are processing all the information at hand, integrating it to make the best possible decision and clarifying the goals.
Implementer	Once a team has arrived at a decision on its direction, it needs to implement it. Thereby the Implementer constantly controls the current status and takes measures to work towards the goal.
Influencer	Commonly, the work product of the team needs to be presented by the Influencer for acceptance internally (supervisors, administrators) and/or externally (customers). This is a process of influencing and being persuasive.
Energizer	In the process of getting work done, Energizers are people that infuse energy into the work and others. Teams without enough energy can fall flat and struggle during times of pressure or prolonged projects that require endurance.
Relationship Manager	Since the working of a team is a dynamic interplay of people and their relationships, the Relationship Manager helps to run relationships smoothly and to resolve conflicts.

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Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Differences, and Intercorrelations of Team Roles in Current and Ideal Teams

	Current		Ideal		Difference	Correlation
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> (340)	Ideal & Current
IC	5.99	0.88	6.17	0.94	4.05***	.56***
IG	5.16	1.30	5.45	1.26	7.60***	.85***
DM	5.47	1.11	5.88	0.98	9.49***	.71***
IM	5.29	1.23	5.60	1.16	7.48***	.80***
IN	5.39	1.23	5.70	1.19	7.35***	.79***
EN	5.42	1.21	5.74	1.15	8.00***	.81***
RM	4.92	1.41	5.42	1.35	10.45***	.80***

Notes. *N* = 342. IC = Idea Creator, IG = Information Gatherer, DM = Decision Maker, IM = Implementer, IN = Influencer, EN = Energizer, RM = Relationship Manager.

****p* < .001

TEAM ROLES IN CURRENT AND IDEAL TEAMS

Table 3

Correlations of Team Roles in Current and Ideal Teams with Job Satisfaction, and Seeing Work as a Job, a Career, or a Calling

	Job Satisfaction		Job		Career		Calling	
	C	I	C	I	C	I	C	I
IC	.31***	.03	-.23***	-.04	-.05	.04	.31***	.05
IG	.13*	.09	-.05	.03	.01	.04	.09	.06
DM	.26***	.03	-.14*	-.01	.00	.10	.13*	.00
IM	.22***	.05	-.08	.00	.04	.05	.19***	.17**
IN	.30***	.11*	-.14*	-.04	.02	.04	.17**	.10
EN	.31***	.13*	-.11*	-.02	.04	.08	.15**	.13*
RM	.21***	.08	-.04	.01	.12*	.12*	.13*	.06
R^2	.15***	.03	.06**	.01	.02	.02	.12***	.04*

Notes. $N = 342$. C = Current Team, I = Ideal Team; IC = Idea Creator, IG = Information Gatherer, DM = Decision Maker, IM = Implementer, IN = Influencer, EN = Energizer, RM = Relationship Manager. R^2 = Prediction of all team roles combined.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Response Surface Analysis of the Prediction of Job Satisfaction and Calling by Team Roles in the Current and the Ideal Team

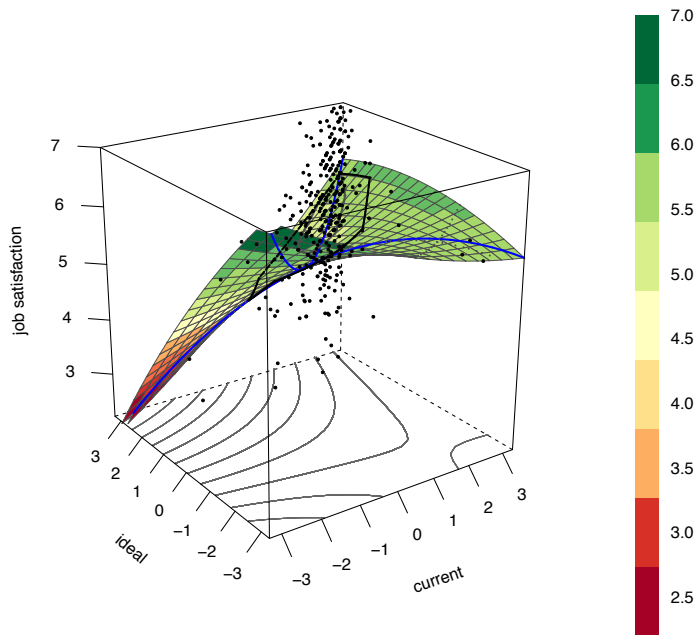
	Job Satisfaction										Calling							
	R^2	a ₁		a ₂		a ₃		a ₄		R^2	a ₁		a ₂		a ₃		a ₄	
		b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se		b	se	b	se	b	se	b	se
IC	.15***	-.18	.14	.12**	.04	.57***	.14	-.14†	.07	.14***	-.11	.12	.13***	.04	.49***	.12	.01	.06
IG	.07***	.01	.07	.05	.03	-.50*	.20	-.47***	.09	.04*	.01	.07	.05	.03	-.39†	.22	-.33***	.10
DM	.12***	.16	.11	-.02	.04	.90***	.20	.20	.17	.06**	.08	.16	.01	.05	.40	.28	.22	.23
IM	.11***	-.05	.08	.06*	.03	.29†	.16	-.38**	.12	.04*	.10	.09	.04	.04	-.18	.24	-.24	.18
IN	.12***	.14†	.08	.02	.03	.63**	.22	.03	.18	.03*	.07	.09	.03	.04	.36	.30	.08	.25
EN	.14***	.09	.08	.04	.03	.28†	.16	-.21	.18	.04*	.11	.09	.03	.04	-.24	.26	.08	.19
RM	.09***	.05	.05	.03	.02	.03	.17	-.30***	.09	.04*	.00	.06	.05†	.03	.12	.19	-.14	.11

Notes. $N = 342$. IC = Idea Creator, IG = Information Gatherer, DM = Decision Maker, IM = Implementer, IN = Influencer, EN = Energizer, RM = Relationship Manager. R^2 = Explained variance of the full polynomial regression model; a₁ = additive effect of the predictors (degree to which the outcome increases as the predictors increase); a₂ = squared predictors and their cross-product (describes the curvature of the relationship between the predictors on the outcome); a₃ = difference between the effects of current and ideal roles (degree to which the outcome increases when one predictor increases while the other one decreases), a₄ = difference between the squared predictors and their cross product (how the discrepancy in the predictors affects the outcome).

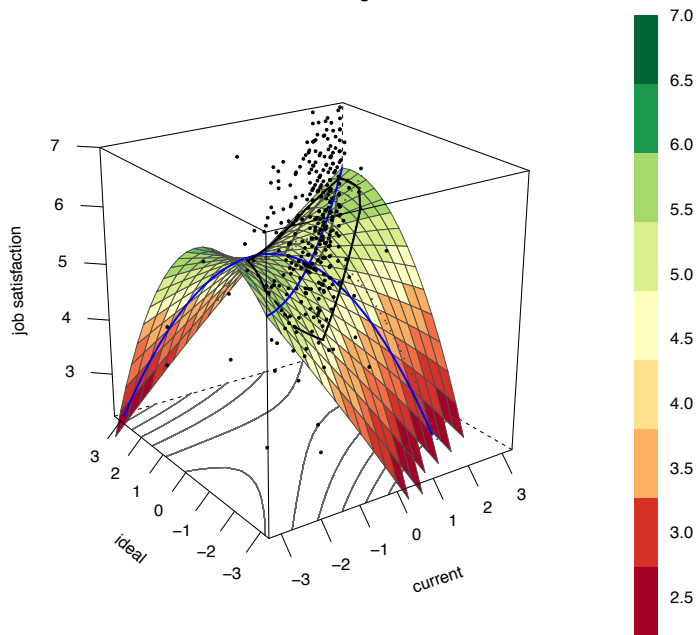
† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Online Supplementary Material

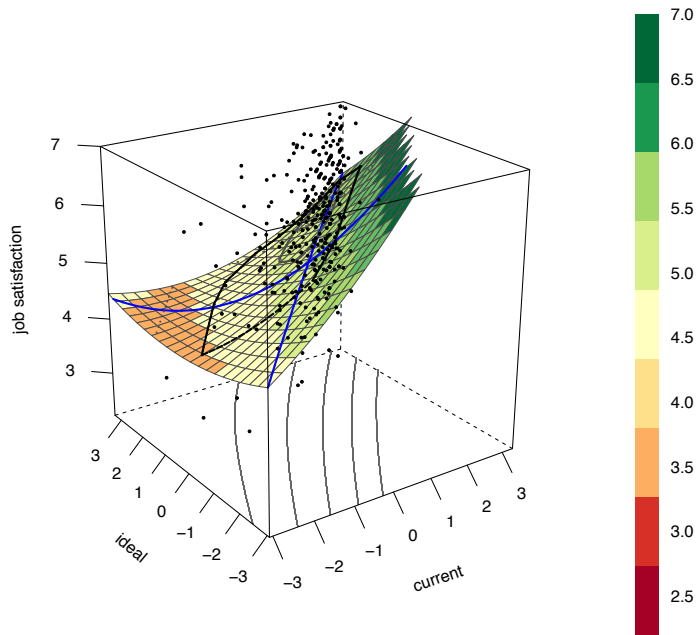
idea creator



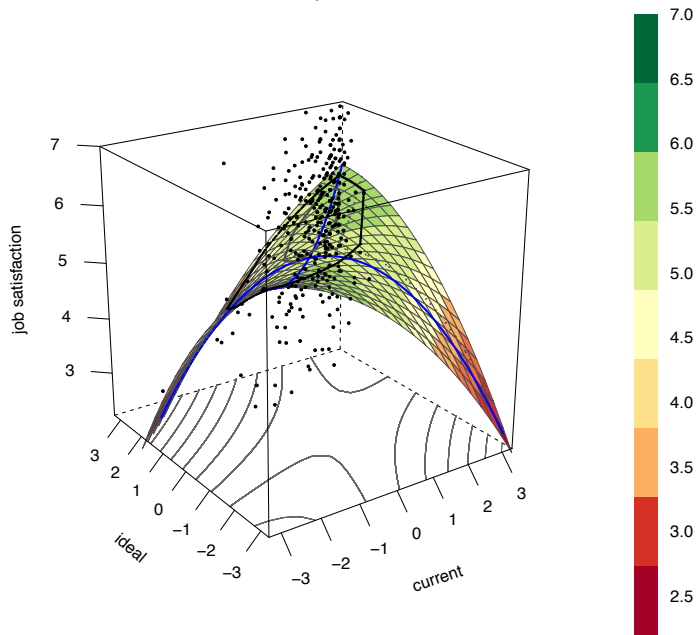
information gatherer



decision maker



implementer



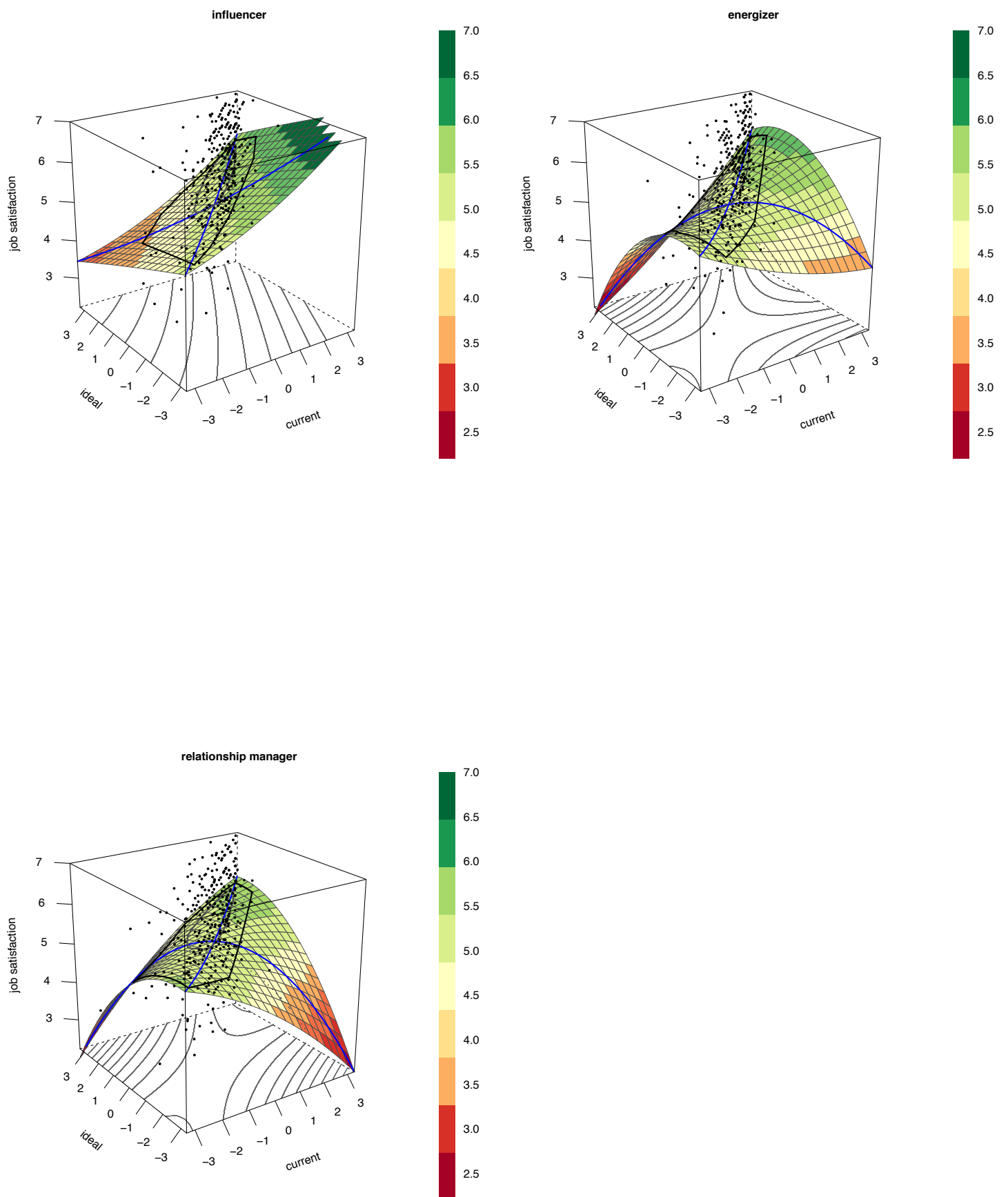
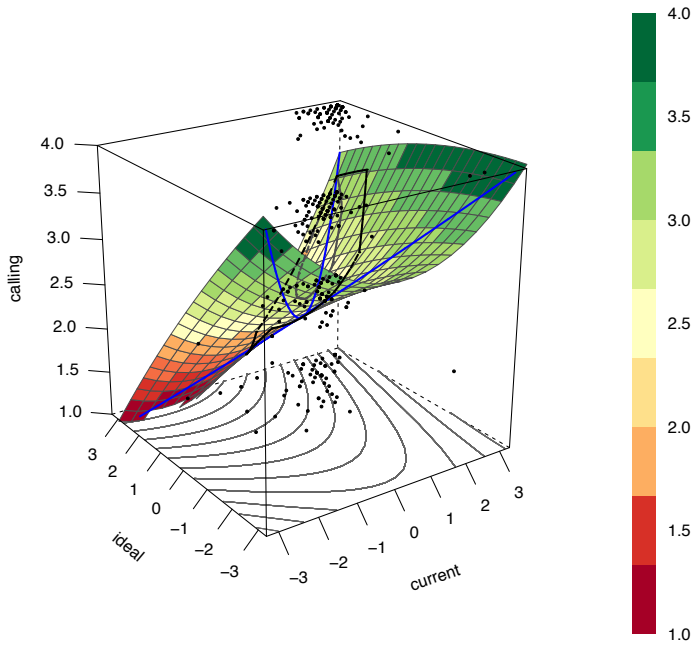
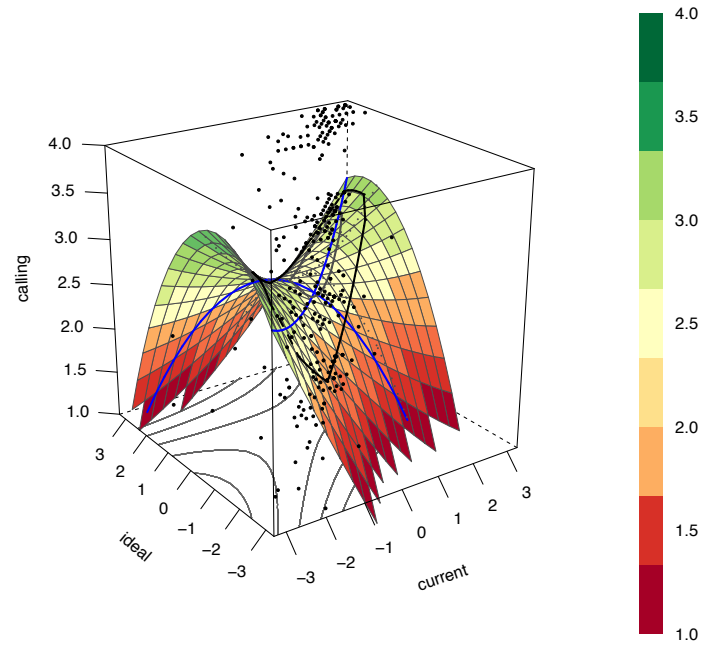


Figure 1. Response surface analysis plots of ideal and current team roles on job satsifaction.

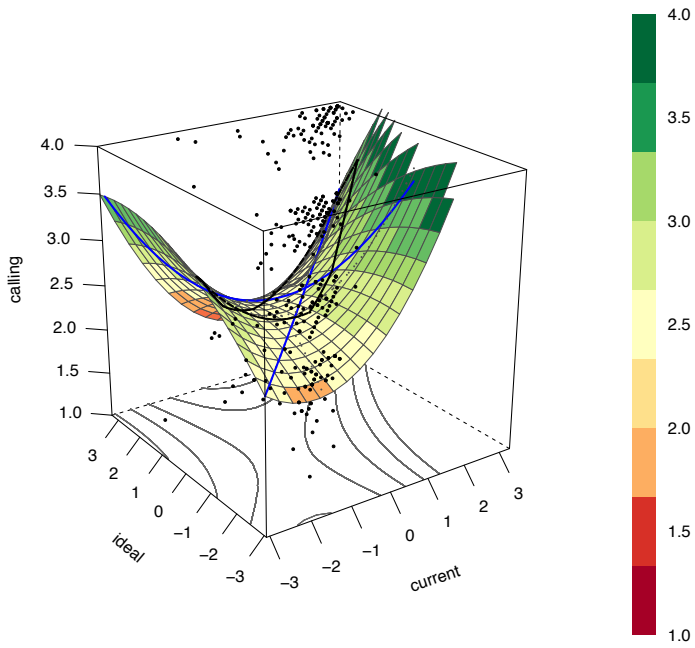
idea creator



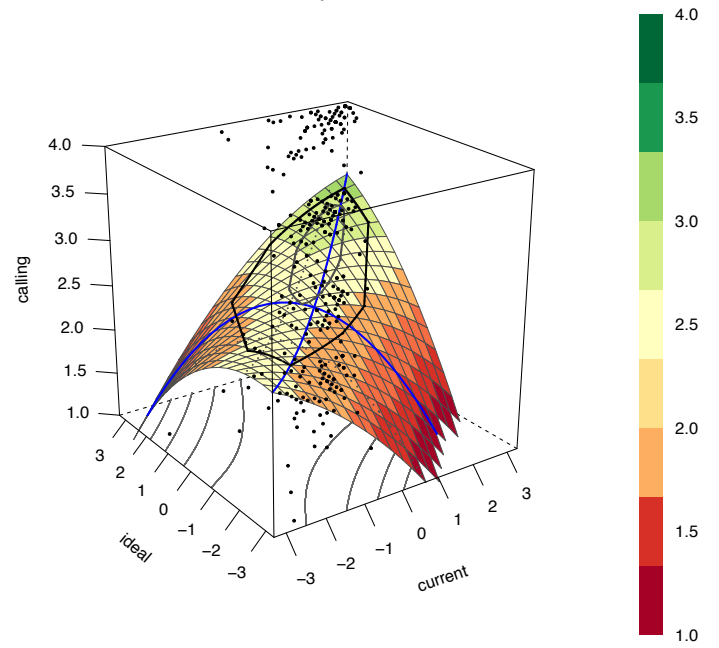
information gatherer



decision maker



implementer



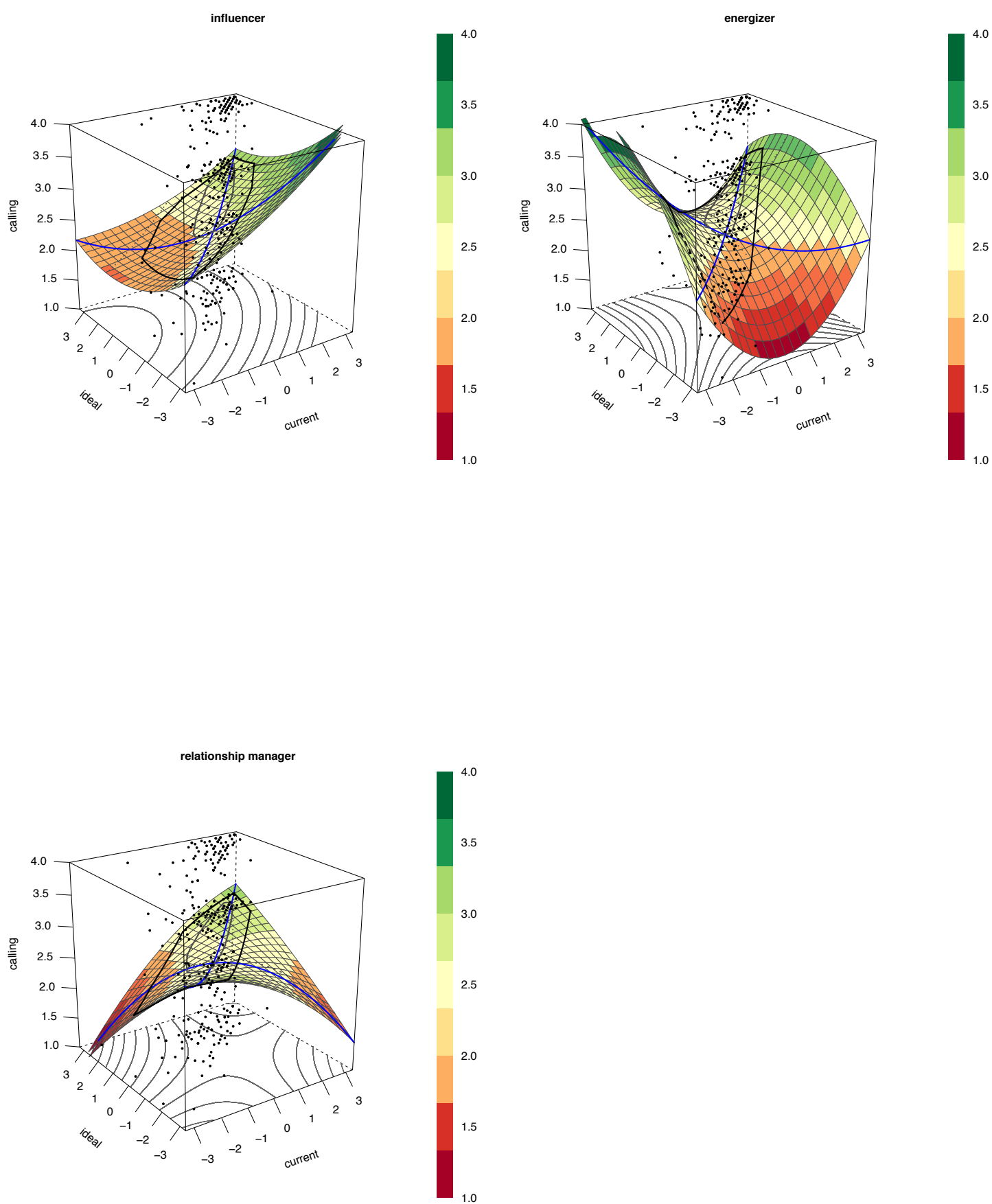


Figure 2. Response surface analysis plots of ideal and current team roles on calling.